

# Gunning for Birdmen, a Rare Sport Which Our Army and Navy Are Preparing

## Both Arms of Service Have Perfected High-Angle Guns Which Will Dispute the Aviators' Dominion.

BY JOHN ELPRETH WATKINS.  
Washington, D. C., September 25.—Gunning for birdmen is a new and terrible sport for which military Nimrods are fashioning weapons odd and sinister. It is turning the science of gunnery all topsy-turvy, for ordnance experts must now create the art of aiming projectiles zenithward rather than, as heretofore, toward the horizon bar.

Thus is to be fought out a new round in the time-honored contest between offensive and defensive instruments of war, which monsters, it is devoutly to be hoped, will ere long, like the Killenny cats, eat each other up, and leave warfare but a crumbled relic of barbarism.

A few years back, when the aeroplane began to excite apprehension rather than admiration in mankind, we were told that the haphazard mortar was the only piece of heavy ordnance that could hurl a shell anywhere near to an aircraft scurrying overhead through the empyrean blue. And since you couldn't aim your clumsy mortar, what was the use? The aircraft seemed destined to hold undisturbed dominion over all things beneath the welkin. It looked as though as mere earthlings were to be forever at its mercy—that he could belt us with bombs and stinkpots to his heart's content, while we merely uttered feeble squeals of terror and took to our bomb-proofs, there to wait until after the old town has been blown to smithereens.

**The Chesty Air Knight.**  
But during recent months those necessary evils of ours, the army and navy, have been busy devising ways and means of knocking the chesty air knight from his high horse. And the next thing you may hear of is an ukase from the biological survey fixing an open season for birdmen, noxious and non-insectivorous.

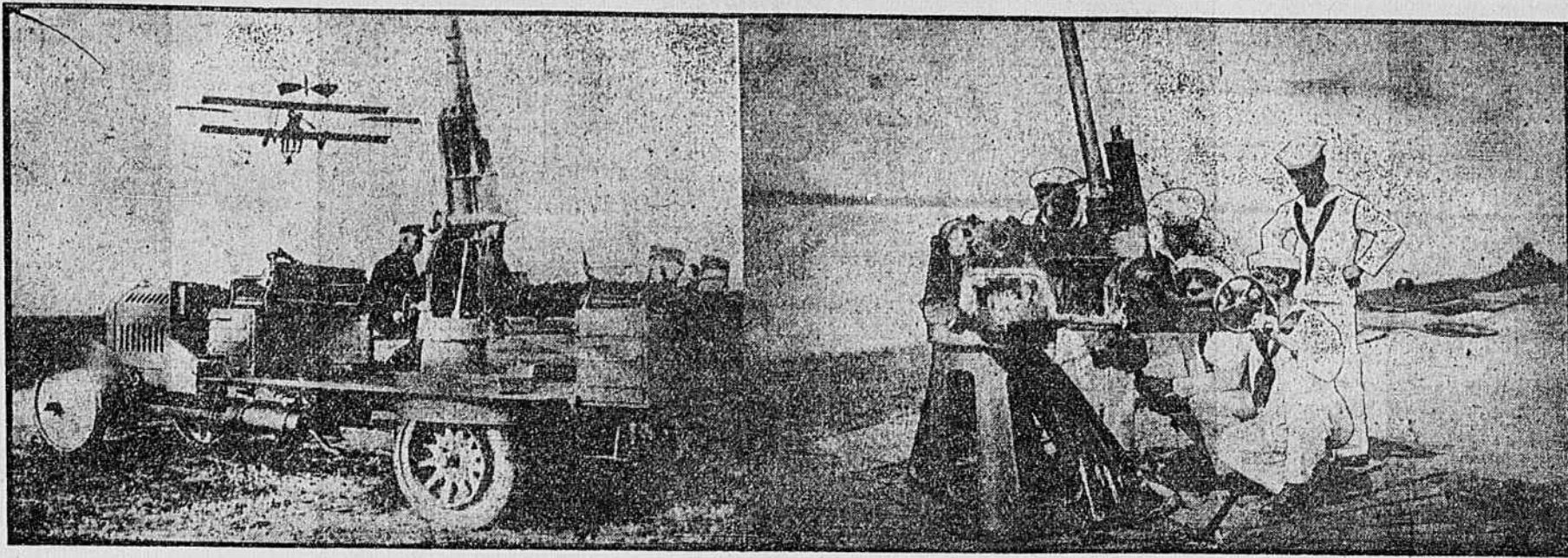
The navy's chief of ordnance, Rear Admiral Twining, has presented me with the accompanying picture of an aeroplane gun, which he and his experts have devised after months of deafening tests, made during the past spring and summer at the naval proving grounds at Indian Head, or the Power Potomac. It will have a bore 11,000 yards through the turquoise dome of the heavens—and that means more than six miles, which is going some.

This picture weapon will not shoot its projectile straight at the zenith, a consummation not devoutly to be wished inasmuch as a bomb or ball scalded would, if missing its mark, fall back among our attacking fleet, which thus might be in grave danger of a hoist by its own petard. But this aeroplane gun can be aimed to within five degrees of the zenith, or up to 85 degrees from the horizon.

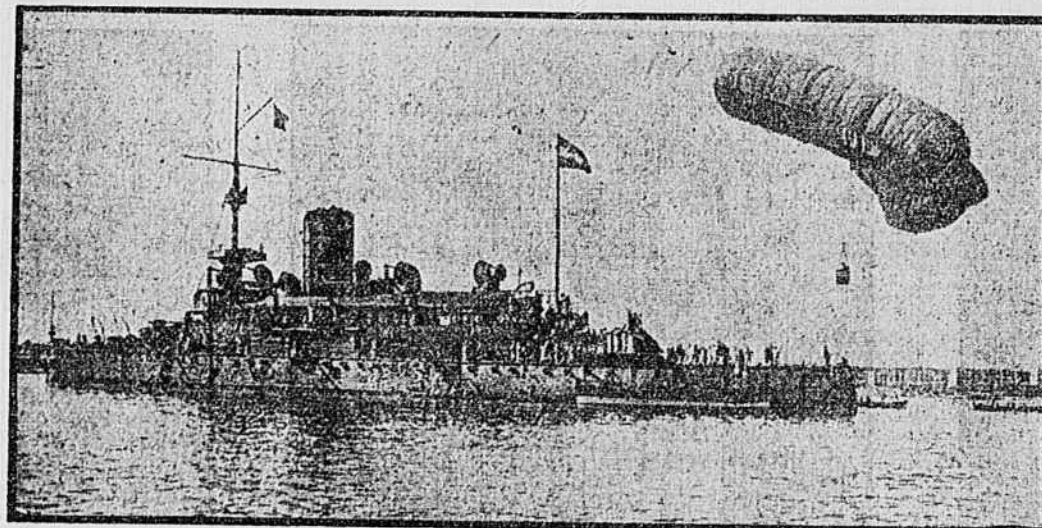
**Shooting Near the Vertical.**  
If you know anything about naval ordnance you will note by the picture that this new naval aeroplane gun looks light for its mount. This is due to the fact that for shooting near to the vertical it must be provided with a much heavier base than when hanging away in the usual horizontal direction. It being a three-pounder, it was found necessary, therefore, to give it the mount of a six-pounder, which the tests found necessary to compensate for the more trying recoil to which it is subjected when fired at a high elevation. Instead of crawling under the gun to take aim at the passing birdman, the gunner takes his station at the side and sights through a prism, which bends the light rays up to his eye. By a single motion of the lever he sets going the quick-point projectile flying at the rate of sixty rounds per minute.

**Army Keeps Its Secret.**  
The army withholds the details of the aeroplane gun for fear that the military attaches of the foreign chancelleries will steal the idea. It can be merely stated that this new weapon designed to annihilate birdmen can, although given a fixed mount, be trained from the shoulder, like a machine gun. In the view of the army ordnance experts, no mechanical device is quick enough to follow a birdman on the wing. The sights vary, automatically, with the changing elevation and trajectory of the gun, and are, like those of the naval weapon, composed of prisms, designed to give the gunner some comfort while shooting.

As might be supposed, the war lord of Europe is also busy devising guns with which to enjoy the new sport of birdman-shooting. Recognizing the fact that a rapidly moving aeroplane might rapidly get beyond the range of his guns, the Kaiser has had the Krupp balloon shooting, having given aeroplane gunning as a hopeless proposition. And one of them has haunted



NEW AEROPLANE GUN, UNITED STATES NAVY.



WAR BALLOONS OFFER BETTER TARGETS.

shell him on the wing—if the roads are good!

**Fleet of Land Monitors.**  
These land monitors weigh four tons, and attain a speed of forty miles an hour. Attached to the quick-firing gun carried by each of these cars is a bomb-proof shield, revolving with the piece, which can be fired at a target almost directly overhead.

Several other aeroplane guns have been turned out by the Krupps for the German army. One is mounted upon a truck with wheels, which can be so placed that the carriage describes a circle while the gun points in the air. Another is stationary, while others are mounted on hauling carriages. All are fitted with a special device for taking the heavy recoil suffered by all guns that are pointed at a high elevation. One of these guns throws an ordinary shell of nine pounds, and another hurls a "flying shell," designed to set fire to aeroplanes and balloons on striking them.

England, too, is getting ready for the new sport. On Salisbury plain she has been hanging away at targets fashioned to simulate birdmen in various crafts.

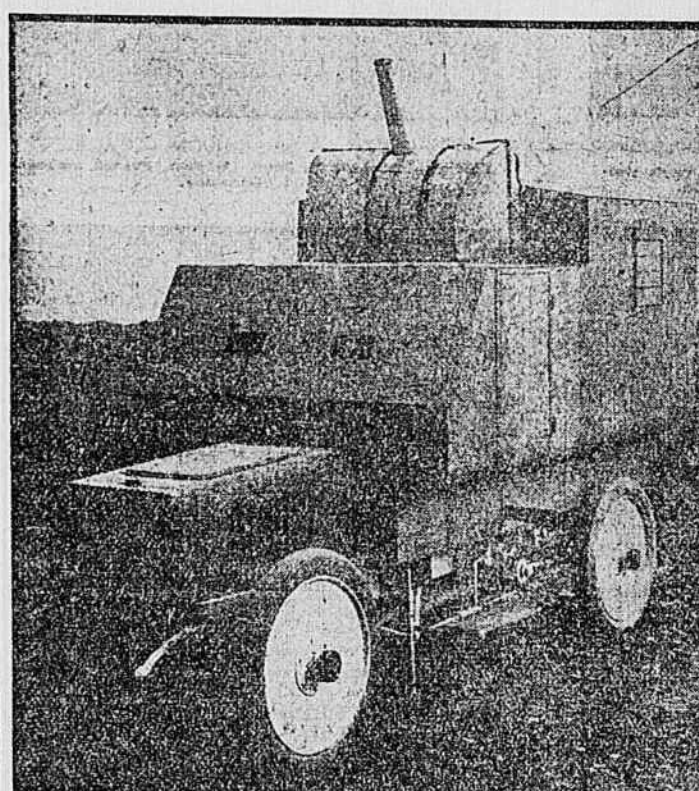
**Show No Gooseflesh Yet.**  
But the birdmen are not breaking out into gooseflesh as they learn of these devices designed to bring them down from the heavenly blue. They are rather more prone to bring their thumbs to their lofty noses and denounce wigwag their digits at all the ordnance experts of the earth under their feet. They gligle with glee over the rapidly report that the Germans will hereafter direct their enemies to balloon shooting, having given aeroplane gunning as a hopeless proposition. And one of them has haunted

before my eyes the scientific report of some experiments made by one Emault-Peltier, a Frenchman, who claims that aeroplanes cannot be shot while retreating from the enemy. This Frank with the hypochondriac name, it appears, has lately stood behind his aeroplane, while the propeller has been in motion and has made many futile endeavors to fire into the stern of the craft. He claims that all of the bullets were wafted aside by the column of air thrown back spirally by the revolving blades. So much for the impossibility of a rear attack, but how about firing into an aeroplane when broadside to you?

**Defeat Mr. Birdman.**  
You ask Mr. Birdman that and he wants you to figure out, mathematically, the chance of covering with anything heavier than a Winchester, an aeroplane 3,000 feet up and darting a mile a minute through the three dimensions of space. If there were a whole regiment of sharpshooters, and each aimed one of these new-fangled aeroplanes, guns at a bunch of aeroplanes, one craft might be struck, the air scout admits. But even then, a clear little hole through one of the aeroplanes would probably be the extent of the damage.

The war balloon offers a much better target than the aeroplane, when it comes to trying one's hand at this new sport. But even after the balloon has been peppered till its skin looks like a porous plaster the odds are in favor of the aeronaut's escape. This was indicated lately by some experiments made by the Germans at Lydd. After the high-angle Krupps had ridged the lower portions of their envelopes the balloon subjected to the fire were still held in the air by the upward pressure of the gas, and finally the drop of the perforated balloons to earth was sufficiently gradual to have allowed the escape of any aeronauts inside the baskets.

**Has Always Had the Laugh.**  
The military air scout has successfully defied the enemy's powder and shell since that remote day, 117 years ago, when the first war balloon went forth



AUTOMOBILE AEROPLANE GUN, GERMAN ARMY.

to battle on the plain of Flourey. The intrepid Colonel Courteille, who, under the banner of France, commanded the world's first aerial warship. Entrepreneur, against the Austrians, heard shot and shell whizz past his head, but he and his companions "finished their observations in defiance of the signals the French general won a rapid

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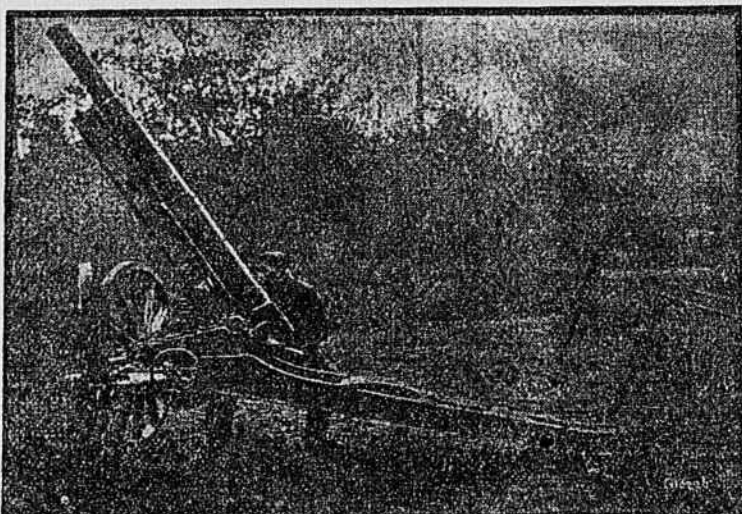
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GETTING READY TO AIM.



KRUPP AEROPLANE GUN.

and speedy victory that inspired Carlyle to pen this comment:  
"By heaven," answer spyglasses, "it is a Montgolfiere, a balloon! Austrian cannon battery barks at this Montgolfiere harkies as a dog at the moon!"

Thus did the exciting game begin, and of the scores of fearless aviators who have since played it all seem to have returned to terra firma unscathed and unscared. Our Union army's plucky aviator, Thaddeus Lowe, hung safely aloft in his basket undaunted by thousands of Confederate bullets, and equally defiant were the British air scouts who floated over Ladysmith while the Boers vainly tried to pepper them with lead.

The air knight has had all of this for. Now let us see what he can do to defy new engines that are being forged to compass his destruction.  
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### Bristol Social News

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]  
Bristol, Va., September 30.—Miss Katherine S. Mercer, of Rocky Mount, N. C., and W. C. Koontz, of Harrisonburg, came to Bristol and were married Tuesday afternoon in St. Ann's Catholic Church, the Rev. Father Meyer officiating. The nuptials were witnessed by a number of the Bristol friends of the bride. The couple went from here to Lookout Mountain on their bridal tour.

Invitations have been received here to the wedding of Ferdinand Powell, of Johnson City, Tenn., and Miss Margaret Hayes, of Bristol, Tenn. The bride-elect is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lyndner M. Hayes, and is a highly esteemed young society woman. The groom-to-be is a prominent young business man of Johnson City, who formerly resided at Wytheville. He is a brother of J. Norment Powell, chief of police of Johnson City, Tenn., and a brother of J. Norment Powell, of Chattanooga, Tenn.

Roy Kent, formerly of Bristol, and Miss Zilretta Matthews, of Texas, were married recently. They will reside at Richmond, Va. The bride is well known to many Bristol people, having been educated at Virginia Intermont College, this city.

The marriage of Richard Marshall and Miss Eva Katherine Reeve here on Wednesday, was one of the notable social events of the week. The nuptials were solemnized at the home of the bride's parents, Dr. and Mrs. N. H. Reeve on Sixth Street. The home was artistically decorated and was aglow with autumn colors. The Rev. J. A. Baylor, of State Street Methodist Church, was the officiating minister.

Mrs. John I. Cox has had as her guest this week Miss Eva Bachman, of Chattanooga, Tenn.

Dr. Albert Carter, of San Antonio, Tex., a distinguished Methodist divine, was the guest of Bristol relatives this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Anson King, Mrs. Frank Blanchard, Mrs. J. P. Pendleton and Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Cox, all of Bristol, were among the visitors at the Appalachian Exposition this week.

Mrs. Jere Moore and little daughter, of Atlanta, Ga., are here on a visit to friends, this being the childhood home of Mrs. Moore.

Mrs. Daniel S. Heaton, of Lebanon, Va., was here Wednesday to attend the Marshall-Reeve wedding.

Mr. and Mrs. C. C. English have returned from a pleasure trip through the Northwest. They spent some time in California, and came from there to Minnesota, to visit before returning home.

Colonel James M. Barker and son left to-day for an extended trip through the West and Northwest. They will be away six weeks or more.

**Arvonian Social News.**  
[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]  
Arvonian, Va., September 30.—Rev. T. H. Lacy, D. D., of Blackstone, long a resident of this county, where he has many friends, preached in the Methodist Church here on last Wednesday night to a large congregation.

Mrs. Edmondia Shackelford, who has been spending some time with her sister, Mrs. Richardson, has returned to her home in Richmond.

Miss Tina Jamison, of Fluvanna county, has been a visitor at the home of Dr. Charles W. Anderson, at Ore Bank, East Arvonian.

Miss Florence Pettit, of Fluvanna county, will spend the winter at her sister, Mrs. Reuben O. Nicholas, at Arvonian High School.

Miss Cassie Duval has returned to her home here after a visit to Gladstone.

Miss Hannah Martin, of Charlottesville, who will have charge of the higher grades in the grammar department of the High School, arrived here this week to take charge of her classes and to relieve Miss Mollie Butcher, who has been teaching in her absence.

James Duval, of Northern West Virginia, is visiting at the home of his sister, Mrs. Reuben O. Nicholas.

Mr. and Mrs. T. Brown Weller left this week for Staunton, where they will remain some weeks, visiting friends and relatives. Later Mr. Weller will visit his daughter, in Indiana.

A. L. Pitts, Jr., visited Buckingham Courthouse, last week.

Rosser Pettit, a prominent farmer of Fluvanna county, was in Arvonian Sunday last.

Miss Edith Pitts, of "Bellevue," spent the week-end at "Bear Garden," the guest of her friend, Miss Edith Marie Wilson.

Mrs. A. L. Pitts visited Richmond this week.

Mrs. Lettie S. Morgan, with her two daughters, Lettie and Eleanor, moved to the Arvonian Inn from their handsome home here.

Rev. Plummer F. Jones visited Buckingham Courthouse, last week.

On Sunday he will preach in the new York Union Presbyterian Church, and take steps look to the dedication of the church, which will be some time in November.

Misses Bessie Abrams and Mrs. Cora Abrams, who have been spending a month at the Arvonian Inn, left on Thursday for their home in Port Deposit, Md.

Rev. R. L. Wiggfield, of Dillwyn, pastor of the Baptist Church here, is a member, spent Thursday night here.

Dan Keller, a well known citizen of Cumberland county, was in town last week.

Alexander Williams has returned to Staunton, where he will again enter the Staunton Military Academy as a student.

**Raleigh Social News.**  
[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]  
Raleigh, N. C., September 30.—The marriage of Miss Irene Lacy and Charles Grandison Rose will be an especially interesting social event in Raleigh on Wednesday, October 1. Miss Lacy is a daughter of Hon. B. R. Lacy, State Treasurer. Mr. Rose is a prominent young attorney of Fayetteville. He represented Cumberland county in the lower house of the General Assembly.

The Kentness Book Club held a delightful meeting Tuesday afternoon with the Misses Johnson, on Person Street.

Miss Daisy Walit has gone to Greenville for the winter, joining the faculty of the East Carolina Training School, as instructor in Latin.

Instructions are out for the marriage of Miss Alice Marshall and John B. Tillinghast, of Fayetteville, the marriage to be at the home of her mother, Mrs. William Hall, Wetmore, in Greensboro, October 17. They will reside in Fayetteville.

The Kentness Book Club has elected Miss May Johnson as president for the coming season. It succeeded Mrs. William Royall, resigned. Mrs. H. M. Winfrey is elected vice-president. The club will make a special study of the cities of Europe and of their conditions for the coming season.

There was a very pleasant porch

party Tuesday evening by Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Borghold at their lovely home in Cameron Park. The members of the cabinet of the Young Men's Christian Association and a number of young women were the guests. Progressive conversation was a novel feature of the evening. Miss Jenkins, of Newbern, was an out of town guest.

Mrs. H. C. Evans was hostess for a delightful box party for "The Man on the Box" matinee. The party was in honor of Mrs. E. E. Harwick, Mrs. Clark and Miss Carrow, of Washington, N. C., were out of town guests. Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Wilson have returned to the city after an absence of several weeks on a pleasure trip North, and to relatives of Mr. Wilson in Caswell county.

### Blacksburg Social News

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]  
Blacksburg, Va., September 30.—A number of people from town and near-by were attracted to Roanoke by the "Elks" convention, the fair and the presentation at the Academy of Music Thursday night of "The Gambler." Several others took advantage of the latter motor parties went down for the latter, others took advantage of the special trains on the two railroads.

Mrs. John T. Knight has closed her summer home here and returned with her family to Washington for the winter. Mrs. Fanny Harrison Pantan, of Danville, takes Mrs. Knight's house for the college season.

William H. Palmer, Jr., and Mrs. W. Ormond Young arrived at "Mountain View," from Richmond Wednesday night.

Director of the experiment station, S. W. Fletcher, Mrs. Fletcher, and their children, are at home after spending a month in Augusta county.

Dr. Charles N. McBryde has returned to his duties in the United States Department of Agriculture, at Washington, after spending his vacation here.

Mrs. G. B. Earheart and little son, of Tucson, Ariz., and Mrs. N. E. Earheart, of Pulaski, are guests of Mrs. Mark F. Slusser.

Mrs. J. L. Eakin and Miss Elizabeth Woolwine have returned from a visit to Amsterdam and Elliston.

Miss Nellie McBryde left for Fredericksburg Thursday after spending several weeks here with Professor and Mrs. R. Davidson.

Mr. and Mrs. Wirt Dunlap left this week for their future home in Hazlehurst, Miss., having lived in Blacksburg for nearly twenty years.

Professor Alfred W. Drinkard, of the Institute, has bought the Dunlap home and will take possession at once. Miss Emma G. Houston has returned from a month's visit to Mrs. Mary Lou Black, in Pulaski.

**Amherst Social News.**  
[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]  
Amherst, Va., September 30.—The Amherst High School will open for the session of 1911-12 on Monday morning. It is expected that the attendance this year will be larger than usual.

Miss Lina Carrington, of Lynchburg, is Miss G. C. Ellis's.

O. L. Evans spent several days this week in Norfolk.

H. S. Rucker, of Buena Vista, was in town Tuesday.

Rev. J. L. Wiley, of Eagle Rock, last week spent several days with relatives here.

Miss Edith Gatling and little son are at the home of Captain and Mrs. John M. Fawcett.

Mr. and Mrs. Brodie and Mrs. Rogers, of Holcomb Rock, are at Mrs. S. B. Talfer's.

Miss Mary Scott left Friday for Princess Anne county, where she will teach this session.

Miss E. Hudson, of the Pleasant Grove section, this week was a guest of Mrs. Bessie E. Ware.

Mr. and Mrs. Percy A. Page and children, of Blacksburg, are visiting their parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Fago.

**Warrenton Social News.**  
[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]  
Warrenton, Va., September 30.—Miss Ida Pollard, who has been spending the summer in Warrenton, left on Saturday for her home in St. Louis.

Miss Jennie A. Murchison, of Williamsburg, N. C., is the guest of Miss Ida Evans.

Hugh Spillman and Beverly Westheimer left on Wednesday for Baltimore and Alexandria.

Miss T. J. Semmes and Miss Jarreau have returned to Warrenton after spending some time in New York.

Mrs. Howell Peabody, of Atlanta, Ga., who left for her home this week after spending the summer in Warrenton with Mrs. J. M. Payne, entertained the Reading Club Wednesday afternoon.

Foreman, who has been spending the summer at the Bell, has returned to her home in Raleigh, N. C.

Miss Chevre of Baltimore, spent the week with Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Marshall.

Miss Emily Fletcher is the guest of her sister, Mrs. R. W. Cook, in Arlington.

Miss Matilda Tiffany, of Landmark, is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Tiffany.

Miss Madge Smith, of "Ripley," will leave Warrenton in a short while for Constantinople, where she will spend the winter with friends.

John C. Pemberton, who is a student at the Federal High School, spent the week-end in Warrenton with friends.

Mr. and Mrs. A. Payne, of Clarksville, Va., spent some time in Warrenton this week.

Lieutenant and Mrs. Gratton Reall entertained at Conway Grove on Saturday afternoon in honor of the birthday of their little daughter, Jane Leigh. Lieutenant and Mrs. Reall returned to Washington on Sunday afternoon.

Misses Annie Camden, Elizabeth, Josephine and Lucy Spillman, Mr. and Mrs. Isham Keith, Miss Randolph, Ed. Spillman, Mr. Ross, of West Virginia, and Mr. Randolph, have returned to Warrenton after a trip across country to Luray and Natural Bridge.

B. D. Spillman, Jr., has returned to the McKenzie School, at Robb's Ferry, N. C., to teach.

Miss R. E. Evans, wife of Dr. St. Paul's School, Baltimore, Lucien Keith, Jr., Herbert Horden